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NEW BOOKS REVIEWED

THE BRITISH NAVY IN BATTLE. By Arthur H. Pollen. Garden City: Doubleday, Page & Company.

That public opinion should be for the most part ill-instructed, if not quite uninstructed, about naval matters, is a condition more regrettable than surprising. What could have been more natural than for people to think, as they did think, before the war, that "battleships are everything"? And why should not one take it for granted to-day that submarines and destroyers are everything? Did not the British Admiralty attribute the escape of Von Hipper at the Dogger Bank to the unexpected presence of enemy submarines? And did not Scheer at Jutland succeed in preventing by a torpedo attack the close action he dreaded? If battleships are too precious to be risked against such tactics, the conclusion seems obvious.

It would make little difference, of course, whether the layman's reasoning on such points were right or wrong if all questions of naval policy were invariably decided by a well-organized and perfectly qualified body of experts. This desirable state of affairs did not begin to exist in England, however, until early in 1918. Meanwhile, blunders were committed, of which the attempt to force the Dardanelles was only one. Apart from that terrible mistake, there were two main causes hampering the usefulness of the British Navy. In the first place, naval authorities said, and the public believed, that an "invincible" navy was as good as a "victorious" navy. In the second place, there was no Higher Command to work out accurate answers to all those technical problems which must continually arise in naval operations, and which no one man is competent to solve.

These two ideas come out as clear as daylight in Arthur Pollen's surprisingly frank, minutely searching criticism, not of the British Navy, but of British naval policy. For that is what Mr. Pollen's book, *The British Navy in Battle*, really is—a far-reaching and accurate criticism, of a sort that few men at any time have had the knowledge and the courage to write. Seldom indeed, when a great crisis has been passed, is one found to point out unsparingly and at the same time without the least suspicion of special pleading, the errors of the winning side. Mr. Pollen, to be sure, seems sometimes to be aiming at mere instruction or even at popular interest. But his clear non-technical explanations of such matters as the control of gunfire and the superior accuracy of heavy cannon, his well-reasoned and thrilling narratives of

action, scarcely obscure for any but the most superficial reader, and certainly are not designed to *camouflage*, his actual purpose. In reality, throughout his whole treatise, Mr. Pollen strikes with the power and precision of a well directed naval bombardment at certain well-fortified *wrong ideas*.

Like all impersonal, vigorous, well-informed thinking, Mr. Pollen's strictures have a lasting value. Take the hard-gained naval experience of Great Britain in the late war, place all the facts on the table, analyze the technical matter as you would a chess-problem, but include the human elements, too, and treat them, if you can, with equal coolness. Then, so far as your insight will allow, let the facts lead you to certain simple (but not obvious) general conclusions. The result ought to be a degree of enlightenment such as many in the pre-war period desired to gain and could not gain.

England's naval experience is set forth by Mr. Pollen in very full detail and in very clear outline. Roughly, this experience may be summed up as follows:

In 1914, before the British ultimatum was despatched, the British fleet was at its war stations, and within a week transport and trade were going on without interruption. On August 28, in the action near Heligoland the Germans ran away from the English ships, thus apparently conceding the "invincibility" of the British Navy. But in September *Goeben* and *Breslau* were allowed to slip out of the Adriatic and to reach Constantinople, where their presence was a large factor in enabling the Germans to control Turkey. The commerce-destroyers, *Emden* and *Karlsruhe*, were at large, as was Von Spee with a formidable fleet. Several British cruisers were sunk by submarines, and as a final insult German battle-cruisers crossed the North Sea and ravaged a small town of the east coast.

These occurrences brought about the first naval crisis. Prince Louis of Battenberg retired, and Lord Fisher became First Sea Lord of the Admiralty. Then for a time there was vigorous action. The destruction of Craddock's fleet by Von Spee off Coronel in November, 1914, was amply avenged by Sturdee at the Falkland Islands in December. Meanwhile, *Emden* had been defeated and captured by *Sydney*, and *Karlsruhe* seemed to be in hiding. Finally the ignominious flight of the Germans in the action off the Dogger Bank, together with the destruction of one German war-vessel, the *Blücher*, was counted as a considerable British victory.

Although Von Tirpitz's threat of an underwater blockade was disquieting, it caused at first little anxiety, and the second crisis in naval affairs did not occur until the spring of 1915, as the result of the disastrous failure at the Dardanelles. Then there was another change of régime, Sir Henry Jackson succeeding Lord Fisher as First Sea Lord. In reality a much more drastic remedy was needed. "The lessons of the first crisis and the second crisis," says Mr. Pollen, "were the same. Things went wrong in October, 1914, for precisely the same reasons that they went wrong in February, March, and April, 1915. The German battle cruisers escaped at Heligoland for exactly the same reasons that the attempt to take the Dardanelles forts by naval artillery was futile. We had prepared for war and gone into war with no clear

doctrine as to what war meant, because we lacked the organism that could have produced the doctrine in peace time, prepared and trained the navy to a common understanding of it, and supplied it with plans and equipped it with means for their execution."

On May 31, 1916, was fought the indecisive battle of Jutland, in which the Grand Fleet failed to come to close quarters with the enemy because of the risk from torpedoes. Though it was obvious that the way to deal with the submarines was to mine them into their harbors, and that the only obstacle to this operation was the German fleet, the doctrine of the "Invincible Navy" still held sway. It was no immediate dissatisfaction with the results of Jutland, but rather the growth of the submarine peril, that led to the third naval crisis. By July, 1916, the world was losing shipping at the rate of three million tons a year. Although when Admiral Jellicoe went to Whitehall several colleagues accompanied him from the Grand Fleet, the change of direction and of personnel was not adequate to meet the needs of the occasion. Ruthless submarine warfare went on, and it was clear that unless this were checked England and her Allies could hold out only for a limited period.

In the summer of 1917 began a reorganization, which was completed in the following year. The lesson had now been learned, and the results were seen in the growing mastery of the submarine that marked the period from June, 1917, to January, 1918. A Higher Command was built up; the principle of convoy was adopted. In 1918 a mine barrage was stretched across the channel; minefields were placed in the North Sea, from Norway to Scotland, and in the Kattegat. On April 22 and 23 came the well-planned, daring, and effective operations against Zeebrugge and Ostend. Something positive and definite had at last been accomplished.

All the actions mentioned in the foregoing summary, as well as some others, are described and analyzed by Mr. Pollen with such skill in narration and such easy mastery of complex detail as make his accounts highly interesting in themselves. But what strikes one most is the discernment which, without once losing its way or once failing to take account of a relevant circumstance, traces the pattern of the general truths that exist in the mass of miscellaneous facts. The destruction of the *Koenigsberg* at Rufgi was accomplished only after the hasty and approximate mastery of technical problems that had never before been properly studied. Again in the battle of Jutland, Sir David Beatty executed a manœuvre which, "judged not as a self-contained evolution but as part of a large plan was one of the most brilliant and original in the history of the naval war." The object of this plan, carried out at great risk, was to bring the German fleet into touch with the British fleet in a position favorable to the latter. Yet by the relatively simple expedients of smoke screens and a torpedo attack—employed, it is true, under conditions of light and of weather favorable to their success—the German admiral was able to escape what looked like certain destruction. Since it cannot be supposed that the British commanders did not know their trade, the only inference from the facts would seem to be that a brilliant and probably successful stroke for victory was frustrated by the obsession of a defensive theory.

Thus, in all the acute analysis of intricate problems which makes

up a large part of Mr. Pollen's book, it will be seen that every fact has been made to give up its meaning, and that the meanings of all the facts gather into two general ideas of a sort not unfamiliar in appearance but seldom found, on examination, to be supported by reasoning anything like so rigorous and realistic as that which Mr. Pollen employs. When Mr. Pollen says that a Higher Command is necessary both to determine the root principles of strategy and to solve so far as possible in advance the technical problems that naval warfare involves, he is not simply urging, on general principles, what would seem on *a priori* grounds to be a good thing: he is giving us the logic of England's experience.

It is plain that a navy department may blunder. It is plain that a navy department needs as safeguards, first, an organization of expert knowledge such as will enable it to solve its particular problems adequately and consistently, and, second, such an education of public opinion as will subject the administration of the navy to the wholesome effect of intelligent criticism while preserving it from ill-judged interference. In a democratic country, like England or America, in which naval measures must inevitably be influenced to some extent by the popular judgment, there is danger when the people, disappointed with the results of naval policy, simply cry out against certain leaders and so bring to pass changes of a political rather than an administrative nature; and there is danger, at least as great, when the people are led by specious logic into false security. Surely these things are worth knowing and pondering.

THE ESSENTIALS OF AN ENDURING VICTORY. By André Chéradame. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.

Although it was completed a little before the cessation of hostilities and so fails to take into account the armistice and the facts immediately connected with that event, M. Chéradame's latest book is important and timely. One can never be sure that the depths of German duplicity have been sounded; one can never be warned too often against the old fatal mistake of underrating the enemy. It is because M. Chéradame was one of the first—if not actually the first—of men outside the Central Empires to take the full measure of the Pan-German scheme, that he has been able all along to perceive the hidden motives and to appreciate the resources of the Germans. The map of Europe, as he has studied it, has furnished the key both to economic and psychological problems—in short to the whole problem of power.

M. Chéradame anticipated what David Jayne Hill has called "Germany's pose for peace," and he was quick to see the dangers that might grow out of an armistice.

It is surprising to learn the extent to which during the war Allied public opinion was misled as to real conditions in Germany. From the rumor that the Kaiser was dying of cancer to the seemingly authoritative statement that the German people had at last learned, despite their rulers, the magnitude of the disaster that had befallen their arms, all was deceit subtly designed to encourage a too hopeful feeling among the people in the Allied countries and thus